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ABSTRACT

Training specialists currently recommend continuing education as a means for librarians and information officers to improve their professional qualifications and keep abreast of developments in their field. The role of professional organizations is particularly important in this area. The Polish Library Association (PLA) has always been very active in the field of library education in Poland. In fact, it is due to the PLA that the first training courses were organized in the period 1918-1939. After the end of World War II, basic training for librarianship became institutionalized as many universities created departments of library science. The educational activity of the PLA has taken on a new character as the association currently participates in: (1) program commissions on library education at the college and university level; (2) consultations on the required level of professional qualifications during salary negotiations; and (3) the initiation and implementation of a whole range of professional courses as supplements to university programs. (THC)

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THE ROLE OF THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATIONS IN THE CONTINUING EDUCATION OF LIBRARIANS, WITH SOME EXAMPLES OF THE EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY OF THE POLISH LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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The paper presents general ideas on continuing education as a learning process recommended by training specialists. The great advantage of this method of training for librarians and information officers as seen by different library associations is emphasized. The role of the Polish Library Association in the library education system is described. Different examples of continuing education activities of the Warsaw branch of the Polish Library Associations are also presented.

One of the social sciences in which radical changes have taken place in recent years is education.

Changes in education concern not only modernizing instruction programmes on all levels, from kindergartens through universities, but lead to revision of hitherto existing basic assumptions which shape the activity of the school system. Until the sixties, a notion of one-time education (attained usually during youth) dominated in educational systems, but the epoch of education crisis observed in many countries during the mid-sixties brought changes to the traditional content of instruction and didactic methods. Attempts to change teaching principles came about at the same time, to extend the time of education in the life of contemporary man without limiting it just to youth.

The idea of continuing education to be realized throughout the whole life of a man has become dominant. Is this idea a completely new one?

Theoreticians of education disagree on this question. For example, a French pedagogue, Paul Lengrand, sees some continuation of former forms of instruction of adults--evening courses--in today's methods of continuing education. He perceives the main factors causing necessary changes in strategy of education only in the complicated problems contemporary man faces. To such problems which demand proper preparation, Lengrand accounts among others:

- acceleration of the pace of changes in science, technology, social life,
- demographic expansion which poses new demands to education systems,
- constant evolution of science and technology.

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A Polish theorist of continuing education, Professor R. Wroczyński² is of the opinion that the beginnings of continuing education reach back to the epoch of the first industrial revolution during the first half of the nineteenth century. There are attempts to define a term "permanent education." R. Wroczyński assumes that the definition should contain something more complex than mere "complement of education"---a term from adult education.

He proposes to take two aspects of the definition into account:

- (1) "teaching of the ability to follow up development;"
- (2) "modification of attained qualifications."

Also, M. Misztela³ suggests that "the essence of permanent education is constituted by modifying of qualifications under influence of science and technology progress and teaching of abilities which facilitate following up the progress, by raising general and practical qualifications."

The general evaluation is that the introduction of permanent education should change the whole education system, making instruction a constant process that embraces youth as well as the period of professional work.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the main task of education should be teaching in the field of knowledge together with developing the tendency to constant self-education.

Parallel to the creation of continuing education systems, the evolution of educational institutions takes place. Universities still have a privileged position, but an increase of importance of employing institutions and of professional associations acting in this field is also being observed.

In librarianship the interest in this form of improving of qualifications dates back to the sixties. Dynamic development of science and technology has caused library users to make higher demands concerning their information needs. A library worker (especially from scientific and research libraries) remains all the time less a model from the beginning of this century--a model of "waiter of literature." And all the time he must actively watch the development of particular branches of knowledge in order to match the demands of his readers. Also, all the time there is a wider application of new techniques in libraries and information centers and gathering of new types of documents like audiovisual materials.

Professional library associations increasingly see the necessity of organizing ongoing forms of professional improvement. The highest activity in this field is shown by American library unions. Courses of different types become very often one of the main points of the programmes of yearly congresses of these associations. It is seen mainly in the activity of Special Libraries Association in the seventies. Moreover, librarians organizations like the Medical Library Association⁴ demand that their members renew their knowledge every five years.

A leading role of professional associations in the field of this kind of training is mentioned in the article of Professor E.Stone.⁵ The author, discussing effects of an inquiry on institutions responsible for undertaking continuing teaching of library workers sent to American librarians, says that respondents cited library associations as taking the second place. The first place in the opinion of the polled was given to library management. The role of professional associations is evaluated here as a factor of cooperation with library managers and library schools. Attention was also given to the role of specialist press published among others by library unions. This press also assists in the process of continuing education.

In the USA, in the beginning of the seventies, a coordination of dispersed activities of library colleges and library associations in the field of constant professional improvement took place.

Many years of Professor E.Stone's efforts led to the creation of the institution dealing with the system of continuing education of librarians/CLENE--(The Continuing Library Education Network and Exchange). The main form of CLENE activities is the recording of any forms of professional improvement, supervision of their level and publicizing information about these projects in a special bulletin, "Continuing Education Communicator."

The creation of CLENE was an answer to the suggestions made in the sixties by outstanding American librarians to stimulate spreading the idea of not finishing professional education upon attaining a scientific degree or after graduating but renewing and perfecting the knowledge of a librarian working in a changing social environment.

The initiator in the discussion of this problem on an international scale was again Professor E.Stone, when she delivered to the IFLA Congress in 1977 in Brussels a lecture concerning taking continuing education under consideration in the activities of IFLA.⁶ In the author's opinion it would be worthwhile to create a working group within IFLA which would strengthen activities of various library associations in this field. Also, information about continuing education of librarians and information officers could be disseminated with the help of IFLA. This international cooperation could embrace the following topics:

- systematic studies on continuing education with special attention to new methods in psychology and andragogics.
- constant cooperation between practitioners and theoreticians in the field of education,
- collect experiences from piloting researches, which is important for introduction of new education techniques.

Maybe one of the factors in facilitating the process of constant professional continuing education could be organizing exchangeable scientific training on an international scale between library associations belonging to IFLA. As it is now, there were such plans in IFLA programme foundations from 1927, but they were never realized.

Problems of education and professional training constitute one of the forms of statutory activities of the Polish Library Association, known as SBP for its Polish initials. This is the unique professional organization rallying in its ranks librarians from all types of libraries and scientific information centers as well as researchers of librarianship active in library schools of different levels.

In its first period of activities (between 1917 and 1939), SBP concentrated its efforts on shaping homogenous library policy in the newly created Polish State, on preparing proper library law, and defining professional qualifications of librarians. Librarianship and scientific information were not present in university programmes during these years. The only exception was "Library Specialisation at the Socio-Educational Work Course" of the Polish Free University in Warsaw, led by Professor H. Radlińska. The idea of these studies was to prepare public library staffs, though there were cases when the graduates were becoming managers of other types of libraries.

The second stationary school for librarians, also mainly for public libraries, was the One-Year Library School at Warsaw Public Library, which was training the middle-level staff.

An undisputed merit of the library association was the organization of many series of courses which ensured basic training in the field of library technique for young beginners employed in different types of libraries. More than a dozen programmes of such courses were discussed by the most eminent library science scholars, activists of SBP. Examples of that are articles of E. Kuntze and J. Grycz, which were published by the professional library journal Przegląd Biblioteczny (Library Review) in 1930.⁷

The first precise qualifying demands for librarians of the state libraries network were published in the same year. It was the first attempt to shape labour regulations, prepared with an important contribution by the Main Council of SBP. Two main groups of librarians were differentiated: Category 1 was comprised of scientific/academic/librarians, graduates of universities and those who passed a special state library examination. They were predestined to take managerial posts or to take care of special collections (e.g., manuscripts, old prints). Category 2: librarians--technical librarians for whom the basic criterion of general education was matriculation. Moreover, they were obliged to pass a state library examination checking the practical command of the profession. Such systems of qualifying demands were still required in Poland in the first years after World War II (the last examinations took place in 1948).

The role of the library organization in steering self-education of candidates getting prepared to library state exams should be stressed. Because of the high standards of the examining commission and lack of proper publications, it appeared advisable to organize a "Vacation Library

Course of Polish Library Association" in Werke, near Wilno, in 1938. That course was led by one of the outstanding librarians of that period, Professor A. Lysakowski. Graduates of this course passed in their majority the state library examination in the years 1938-1939.

The professional education of librarians changed radically after the end of World War II. Dynamic developments of the network of public libraries of different types, like city, county, or district libraries, which was an effect of realization of the Decree On Libraries of April 1946, brought about the necessity of educating professionals for these new types of institutions.

At the same time appeared the necessity of training new academic librarians for scientific institutions, especially for libraries in the newly founded universities. One should also remember that ranks of qualified librarians were decimated as a result of World War II.

In these conditions, teaching policy was not limited merely to education at different courses (different SBP branches were already organizing proper library teaching in 1945). Efforts of the Main Board of SBP as well as such institutions as the Ministry of Education led to settlements forms of institutionalized teaching as basic methods of preparing the new staff. In 1945 the first library science chair was created in a newly created University in Łódź. It was directed by an outstanding librarianship theorist, Professor J. Muszkowski, and, after his death, by Professor H. Wieckowska. Studies programme, as H. Wieckowska wrote, embraced complex problems connected with production and social circulation of books. Later, chairs of librarianship were opened in 1951 in Warsaw under the direction of Professor A. Birkenmajer, and in 1956 a Library Department for Working People under the direction of Professor A. Knot was founded in Wrocław.

These three centers enjoyed great prestige since their directors were not only librarianship theorists but also excellent experts in library practice as long-time and well-known directors of scientific libraries in Poland.

In the intention of mass teaching of librarians for public and trade unions libraries, a State Center of Library Education in Jarocin was founded in 1948 and a State Center of Correspondence Education of Librarians in Warsaw in 1953 was created. Programmes of these institutions were dominated by subjects connected mainly with propagation of the book and with methods of work with library readers.

In principle, we have now in Poland a well-developed network of the institutions of academic education of librarians and scientific information workers. According to data from December 31, 1982, there are 14 centers providing five-year university degree studies and five centers of post-graduate studies.

The network of the institutions training middle-grade librarians embraces stationary schools: Library Departments of State Cultural-Educational Studies and the State Library College in Jarocin. There is also an Extra-mural Library College in Warsaw⁹ together with branches for active library workers (after one year of library practice) and a One-year Qualification Library Course finishing of which facilitates promotion to a higher official post.

However, it would be wrong to assume that staff necessities were met properly in this way.

The following factors constitute obstacles here:

- Graduates of library studies do not always take up work in libraries,
- Library practitioners and library managers have often many reservations concerning professional usefulness of young librarianship graduates,
- Special libraries managers often prefer to employ experts in given disciplines rather than librarianship specialists.

The activities of the Polish Library Association concerning education and professional training embrace today:

- (1) Participation of SBP representatives in programme commissions concerning library educational institutions on college and university levels.
- (2) Participation of SBP representatives in consultations concerning demanded level of professional qualifications during working out wage rates.
- (3) Initiation and conducting of a whole range of professional courses being supplements of institutional education.

An analysis of the activities of the Warsaw branch of SBP in the field of professional training during the last ten years illustrates possibilities of the Association. The period of the seventies was characterized by considerable development of Polish librarianship.

Under way were attempts to modernize library-information activities in a way of introducing computer techniques and new organizational solutions consisting in the creation of the system of central libraries.

In Warsaw educational subjects were settled mainly for the group of scientific librarians as the most numerous one. In an inquiry of 1975 it was concluded that the greatest interest was given to problems of library automation. The above subjects were not being sufficiently taken under consideration in library studies curricula during this period, hence educational meetings during non-office hours constituted the only possibility of making oneself acquainted with library electronic data

processing (edp). The program of the course was carried on in two cycles. Part one consisted of 10 meetings during which the participants were acquainted with general problems of construction of computers, principles of programming, and different types of application. Theoretical issues were explained by a specialist--a systems designer from the Central School of Planning and Statistics--during a visit to the computer center of the School. For many librarians it was the first "meeting with a computer." During the second part of the course lectures were made by specialists of the institutions where automatic systems had already been introduced--for example, the Central Medical Library, the National Library, the Library of the Warsaw Technical University. Different methods of computer applications in libraries were presented and discussed. There was also a session in the Library and Scientific Information Center of the Wrocław Technical University--a leading center in this field organized for the participants of the library edp course.

Problems of library edp were also the subject of three seminars organized by the Warsaw branch of SBP in 1977, 1978, and 1980. They were stationary seminars lasting one week.

In the last course, in 1980, librarians from outside Warsaw also participated from the Library of the Technical University in Łódź and the Jagiellonian Library in Kraków. The teaching programme was very similar to the seminar presented in 1975-1976. In the theoretical part there were lectures on computer construction, principles of programming and systems analysis. The practical part consisted of demonstrations of computerized library-inforamtion systems.

All these courses were positively appraised in Warsaw circles. Library edp problems were slowly becoming something understandable and more familiar for a wider circle of librarians. Our aim in that type of teaching was not to train specialists, but to give to librarians a general acquaintance of library automation in order to create a favorable climate on the modern technology. As the experiences show, it is one of the crucial conditions of success in the introduction of library automated systems. Lecturers were research workers of the Institute of Scientific, Technological and Economic Information in Warsaw, and representatives of several automated centers: The National Library, Warsaw Technical University Library, Library of the Central School of Planning and Statistics and the University Library in Warsaw.

A topic connected with the edp systems is the indexing and classification of library collections. These are problems in which librarians from special libraries are particularly interested. This group was probably the most interested in the possibility of improving qualifications within the frames of SBP activities. This is a reason of vivid participation of these workers in the weekly meetings on information-retrieval languages held in 1976/77. Topics discussed were: General typology of information languages, UDC-current state and methodics of application, descriptor languages. Also popular were instruction meetings in which problems put forward by special libraries workers in the years 1978/79 were discussed, like for example, problems of acquisition of special trade collections, e.g., guidebooks and industrial literature.

Other educational fields frequented by the members of SBP in Warsaw were seminars concerning special collections. Teaching in this direction was especially useful for workers of research libraries which contain rich collections of manuscripts, old prints, etc. and where managers prefer to employ classical philologists and historians rather than graduates from library schools. Seminar topics were: old books of fifteenth-sixteenth centuries (1976), collecting and cataloguing manuscripts (1977), iconographic collections (1978), and cartographic collections (1979). They were all presided over by specialists from the National Library. They gave the participants possibilities of attaining theoretical knowledge and also during special exercises and demonstrations, of practically learning about the specific character of special collections.

Conclusions

In the face of well known difficulties with adjusting programmes of academic library education to the dynamic development of librarianship and scientific information, it would be worthwhile to discuss the following problems:

- University studies give the basic theoretical foundations of the profession, the specialization would be made by a way of obligatory continuing education connected with the workplace of a graduate.

Also, obligatory participation of library and scientific information centers workers in professional training connected with specificity of their work should be discussed.

- In labour regulations of our profession it should also be pointed out clearly that workers improving their qualifications are preferred.
- Continuing education should embrace current problems of the library profession.
- National library associations are obviously designed to represent these vital interests of our profession. On the international level, it will be an association of national library organizations, i.e., International Federation of Library Associations -- IFLA.

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